

September 15, 2006

State Issues Warning on Foodborne E.coli Outbreak  
Outbreak Appears To Be Associated With Fresh Produce

LANSING - The Michigan Departments of Community Health (MDCH) and Agriculture (MDA) are alerting consumers and the food industry about a current outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 in multiple states associated with the consumption of fresh produce.

At this time, preliminary information suggests that fresh-bagged spinach may be a possible cause of this outbreak.

Consumers are advised to not eat any fresh-bagged spinach and food establishments are advised to pull these products from their shelves and not include in any uncooked menu items. If the bagged spinach is contaminated, washing it has not been proven to make it safe. If dining out, consumers should inquire as to the source of any fresh spinach before ordering.

Michigan has three of the 50 known cases currently associated with this outbreak, said Janet Olszewski, MDCH Director. The individuals affected by the illness reside in Lapeer, Ingham, and Macomb Counties. Two of the cases were hospitalized, and all are recovering. Surveillance for additional cases in other counties is currently underway, she said.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is advising consumers not to eat bagged fresh spinach at this time. Individuals who believe they may have experienced symptoms of illness after consuming bagged spinach are urged to contact their health care provider.

E. coli O157:H7 causes diarrhea, often with bloody stools. Although most healthy adults can recover completely within a week, some people can develop a form of kidney failure called Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS). HUS is most likely to occur in young children and the elderly. The condition can lead to serious kidney damage and even death.

MDCH will continue to keep the public updated as more information about the investigation becomes available. FDA recall information can be found at: <http://www.fda.gov/opacom/7alerts.html>